

# The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

## The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Ketevan of Georgia

Commemorated on September 13

The glorious martyr Ketevan, the Queen of Georgia and bride of Christ, was of the royal house of the Bagratides, the daughter of Ashotan, prince of Mukhrani and great grandson of Constantine III, King of Kartli. Saint Ketevan received a thorough Christian education in the heart of the Georgian Orthodox Church, and in 1581 at the age of 16 was given in marriage to David, the eldest son of Alexander II, King of Kakheti.<sup>1</sup> After several years of marriage, Ketevan gave birth to Teimuraz I (+1663), who was to become an illustrious figure in Georgian history, and who also wrote a versified account of his holy mother's martyrdom. Now David, the Saint's husband, possessed a difficult, irascible character and ambitiously aspired to ascend his father's throne even before the latter's death. In conspiracy with Kakheti's nobles, who were dissatisfied with Alexander II's rule, King Alexander was imprisoned and

David was made king of Kakheti. David, however, was likewise an incompetent ruler, and after a mere six month reign, David died, leaving Kakheti kingless.

Fearing lest the youngest son of Alexander II, George, then still a youth, would someday attempt to slay her son Teimuraz, a rightful heir to the kingdom, Saint Ketevan



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sent Teimuraz as a hostage to the court of Shah Abbas I, for at that time Georgia was in a position of semi-vassalage to that center of Islam. Then the Saint freed herself of the cares of this world, retired to a quiet place, and devoted herself to the study of Scripture and, according to her means, the building of churches and care for the poor. The second son of Alexander, Constantine, had long dwelt in Persia, and had eventually embraced the Mohammedan faith along with a very depraved way of life. Shah Abbas I then summoned this Constantine, bidding him to gather an army, murder his father and younger brother, and take possession of the throne of Kakheti. In a most treacherous and brutal manner Constantine did exactly as the Shah wished. After committing this atrocity, he put the bodies of King Alexander and Prince George on camels and sent them to Saint Ketevan, who lamented over the bodies and gave them Christian burial. Shortly thereafter, Constantine sent emissaries to ask the Saint to become his wife, according to Mohammedan custom. But the bride of Christ refused even to hear the proposals of Constantine's emissaries, and informed the nobles of Kakheti that if Constantine should attempt to bring about the marriage by force, she would flee to Kartli, her homeland.

The noblemen then gathered around the Saint and assured her that, "Without your royal bidding, we shall never be subjugated to anyone else." With great speed they gathered an army, defeated the Persian forces, and slew Constantine, the parricide. Since there was no longer any man of the royal house of Kakheti left, they obliged Saint Ketevan to rule the kingdom herself, which she did from the city of Gremi with great prudence, piety, and clemency, as had her forebearer, Saint Tamara. Seeing that the life of her son Teimuraz was no longer imperiled, she sent word to Shah Abbas that she needed her son's help to govern, and intimated that if he was not returned, she would be constrained to turn for support to the Sultan of the Turks, who was then at war with Persia. The Shah, fearing Turkish intervention, immediately sent Teimuraz (about 16 years old at the time) with many gifts to the Queen, and the two ruled Kakheti together.

In 1605 Teimuraz was anointed King of Kakheti, and Saint Ketevan retired as much as possible from the affairs of state so as to devote herself to prayer and acts of charity. Soon thereafter, Teimuraz married the daughter of Prince Mamia II, Ana, from whom were born two sons, Leon and Alexander, and one daughter,

Tinatin. Ana died after the birth of Tinatin in 1610. This marked the beginning of many more sad events for the Christians of Georgia. Using the death of Queen Ana as a pretext, Shah Abbas invited Teimuraz to Isfahan where the Shah could assuage his grief. Knowing that the Shah was seeking any excuse to invade Georgia and place a loyal moslem vassal over both Kakheti and Kartli, Teimuraz reluctantly journeyed to Isfahan. After showing Teimuraz many hypocritical tokens of affection, the Shah proposed—supposedly to comfort Teimuraz—that Luarsab II, the young King of Kartli and future martyr,<sup>2</sup> should give one of his sisters to Teimuraz in marriage, and the other to the Shah. Teimuraz soon married the elder sister, thinking to please the Shah by leaving the younger one for him. The Shah, however, claimed that he had been denied his rightful wife, and marched on Georgia.

When the inhabitants of Kakheti perceived their imminent destruction at the hands of the vastly superior Persian armies guided by a number of renegade Georgians, they pleaded with Teimuraz to send Saint Ketevan and his younger son, Alexander, to Shah Abbas to intercede for their country and to give proof of their loyalty. The king, accompanied by the nobles and many others, entreated the Saint with tears to save them from devastation.

Saint Ketevan then answered her son, "My child, you know well how many times I have taken the plights of Kakheti upon myself and that, for our country's sake, I have not spared myself. However, I shall accomplish nothing by going to the Shah, since I know that none of my entreaties will prevail upon him to relinquish his intention of ravaging our land."

But constrained by the pleas of the people, Saint Ketevan took many precious gifts and, along with Alexander, set off for Ganja where the Shah resided. After showing great pleasure at their coming, the Shah asked why Leon, the elder son, had not accompanied his brother so they could be reared "'as befitteth their royal dignity.' The holy one transmitted all of this to her son in a letter, but also told him secretly that he was under no circumstances to send his heir to the Shah."<sup>3</sup> The people of Kakheti, however, remonstrated with King Teimuraz that their only hope was to satisfy the Shah's demands, and that Teimuraz himself had lived without peril as the Shah's hostage.

As soon as Leon was also sent, the Shah wrote Teimuraz, "I have no doubt of your loyalty to me: you



have sacrificed your sons and your mother. Now you yourself must come. I shall honor you with gifts and allow you to return to your kingdom in peace.”

Teimuraz, fully aware of the Shah’s treachery, refused to go to Ganja despite the entreaties of his nobles. For this supposed disobedience, Shah Abbas invaded Georgia, destroyed all its cities, churches and monasteries, and murdered or enslaved all who fell under his army’s onslaught; special cruelty was shown to clergy and monastics.<sup>4</sup> Teimuraz and Luarsab II fled to the northwestern province of Imereti, hoping to be able to restore their kingdoms after the invasion.

In 1617, having ravaged the Christian kingdoms of Georgia, the Shah sent Saint Ketevan, her grandchildren Leon and Alexander, and her small retinue to Shiraz, a city in southwest Persia where other Georgian captives were often sent. Instructions were given to the governor of the city that she be kept in confinement, but allowed the service of her retinue, which included her confessor, a priest named George, as well as several nobles and servants. After a few years, the Shah commanded that Leon and Alexander be brought to Isfahan, where they were castrated. Leon died immediately from loss of blood, but Alexander survived and spent the rest of his days in Persia.

Like Job of old, Saint Ketevan endured the deprivation of her beloved grandchildren with thankfulness to God, and began to prepare herself for the inevitable contest of martyrdom. In the house of her confinement a small chapel was erected where the Divine Liturgy was celebrated daily. The Saint passed her days in fasting and reading divine Scripture; her nights were spent in prayer, prostrations, and sleeping on the hard earth. The Shah sent an emissary to her, conveying the Shah’s offer to marry her and make her queen of Persia, if only she would become a Moslem. Likewise, Georgians who had apostatized from Christianity and received high positions in the Persian kingdom strove to shake the Saint’s conviction.

They argued, “Embrace Mohammedanism outwardly, as we do; Christ will forgive you because you do this under constraint and involuntarily.”

Because the Saint was unyielding in her profession, the Shah ordered that her bonds be gradually tightened. Access to her became extremely limited; even her servants were withdrawn from her. Finally the Shah gave her an ultimatum: either she become a Moslem or she would be put to death by merciless torture.

The Persians greatly desired Saint Ketevan’s conversion to Islam because, for one reason, there were many Georgian women captives in Persia, who, hearing of the Saint’s steadfastness, refused under pain of death to renounce their faith.

Both Persians and Georgians alike urged the Queen to save her life, saying, “Accept Islam; if you embrace it outwardly, it means nothing.”

Likewise the Khan of Shiraz, a former Georgian noble and convert to Islam, said to her, “What harm will Jesus do to you while the Shah is enraged against you?”

But the Saint, whose adamant soul was fixed upon the rock of the true faith, could not be shaken. After partaking of a portion of the Divine Body and Blood of Christ, she prayed, “O Christ my King, Word of God, it is not fitting that Thy handmaiden renounce Thee. Let not Thy servant fall into the hands of the devil.” Sealing this prayer with the sign of the life-giving Cross, she was ready for her contest unto blood.

The Shah’s emissaries commanded that a bonfire be lit, into which a cauldron filled with diverse instruments of torture was placed. When the iron had become red hot, the Saint’s servants began to lament bitterly. They were ordered to abandon the Christian faith. Unable to bear the threat of torture, they accepted Islam and asked the Queen to reconsider. She, however, remained unshakable, and even encouraged the priest George as he quaked with terror and began to falter in his resolve.

The time hath also come for me to bear witness to the Name of Christ. Many have denied Him, in dread of torture. But who will remain alive on earth forever? Better it is for us to flee from this world to that place where there is everlasting rest and eternal joy. Dost thou not remember how the Jews dealt with the Son of God, when they had His all-pure hands and feet nailed to the Tree? Let us endure afflictions and tribulations that we may share in His sufferings and resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

At these words, many repented of their cowardice, again professed the Christian faith, and were mercilessly put to death. Then the Shah’s emissaries ordered that the Queen herself be brought to the cauldron. Immediately the torturers stripped her to the waist, tied her to two posts with her arms stretched out as though she were fixed to a cross, and brought red hot tongs from the fire.

Not quailing at the tongs, the Martyr said with a loud voice, "In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Straightway the torturers began to tear away her breasts with the tongs, then the muscles of her arms and back. After this most cruel torment they took small, flat pieces of red hot iron mounted on long handles, and slowly seared every part of her body with them. She was untied from the posts, red hot nails were strewn on the ground, and the torturers laid the Saint upon them. They poured more nails over her, driving them into her flesh by striking her with the backs of shovels. Then they took red hot spits or skewers and completely charred the Saint's chest and back.

The pain caused by these metal instruments was terrible, and the holy one was prepared to commit her soul into the hands of the Judge of the contest, and to receive from Him the crown which she had earned by her struggles. Yet after this, the torturers brought forth from the fire a red-hot chain, and ... wrapped the chain about her waist as it were a cincture. Has any Christian had to endure such pain? The holy martyr was burned and scorched from head to toe, and was yet prepared to become a sacrifice pleasing to the All-holy Trinity.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the torturers took from the cauldron a red hot kettle and held it before the Saint to terrify her. But she, calling forth the last vestiges of her strength, said once more, "In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." Seeing this, the Moslems placed the kettle over her head, down to her shoulders, and Christ's glorious athlete immediately surrendered her soul into the hands of her Lord, on September 13, 1624. A countless multitude witnessed the Saint's unyielding confession and courage.

Some time later, Roman Catholic Missionaries, who were eyewitnesses of the Saint's martyrdom, smuggled her skull and right leg from Persia, and delivered them to her son, King Teimuraz. The whole kingdom, headed by the king and the patriarch, came out to receive the relics of the martyred Queen. With much reverence and solemnity, the remains were deposited under the Holy Table of the Alaverdi Cathedral of Saint George.

The rest of the Saint's relics were taken to India and interred in the Portuguese Augustinian Mission Cathedral in Goa. One of the most treasured personal possessions of Saint Ketevan, her reliquary cross, with

which she never parted during her captivity, ended up in Britain and is kept in the British Museum.

Several expeditions have tried to recover the remains of the Saint from India. But so far, all attempts to locate Saint Ketevan's tomb under the ruins of Goa's Roman Catholic Cathedral have proved to be unsuccessful.

By the intercession of Holy Royal Martyr Ketevan, may the Lord keep us steadfast in the Holy Orthodox Faith. Amen.

*Dismissal Hymn. Third Tone.  
Thy confession*

As a valiant queen of noble spirit, \* thou didst overcome unheard-of torments, \* being strengthened with faith in the Trinity; \* and thou didst save thy whole people from servitude \* by thy confession of Jesus, the King of all. \* O Great Martyr and divine Passion-bearer Ketevan, \* entreat Christ God to grant great mercy unto us.

*Kontakion. Plagal of Fourth Tone.  
To thee, the Champion Leader*

With ardent love, come, let us laud our lady Ketevan, \* that second Judith who hath saved her people Israel, \* bravely slaying the invisible Holofernes. \* When a heated pot was set upon her holy head, \* she was crowned to reign a queen with Christ for evermore. \* Let us cry to her: \* Rejoice, O bride of the King of all.

*Megalyrnarion*

Finding in thy sceptre a heavy cross, \* thou didst bear it gladly \* for thy people and for thy Christ; \* now thy humble manners \* and willingness for sufferings \* have found reward in Heaven, \* Great Martyr Ketevan.

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Kartli and Kakheti were two Eastern Georgian kingdoms.  
<sup>2</sup> He was martyred at the order of Shah Abbas in 1620, and his feast is celebrated on June 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, Vol XVI, No. 5, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Among them are the 6,000 martyred Fathers of Gareja Desert, who were slain on the night of Pascha in 1616. Their memory is celebrated on Bright Tuesday.

<sup>5</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

## Church of St. John the Confessor Outreach Update

As 2009 has gotten rolling, so has the Outreach Program of the St. John the Confessor parish in Ipswich, MA. With the blessing and supervision of Father John Knox, co-chairs Maria Ward and Katherine Marsh have launched several initiatives.

“Many folks in our parish have consistently volunteered in the community, and given alms generously to various local and diocesan efforts. We hope to complement those efforts through our parish activities,” explains Maria.

Katherine adds, “So many people ask me, ‘Which church is St. John the Confessor?’ We want to become more visible in the community through our efforts, and to introduce more of our neighbors to the faith.”

Father John agrees. “We are working hard to create a structure which allows our parishioners, of various means, meaningful opportunities to donate not just money, but also time and energy to the many deserving programs in our local communities. And we are focused on breadth of involvement, particularly among the kids in our parish.”

The Outreach program has already successfully raised \$600 to fund a life-changing surgery for a child through the Rotaplast program.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the parish has come together to make a substantial pledge to support the Russian Missionary Society. Planned activities include coordinated volunteering at local nursing homes, letter writing to incarcerated members of the church, care packages for soldiers transitioning through Landstuhl Army Medical Center, and a parish wide rummage sale/bake sale to raise funds for scholarships for the students of the Miguel Angel Asturias Academy,<sup>2</sup> supported by the St. Paul Fellowship of Labor<sup>3</sup> near the St. Xenia Orthodox Mission in Guatemala.

For more information and/or to support the parish efforts, please email [frjohn@stjohntheconfessor.org](mailto:frjohn@stjohntheconfessor.org).

### Websites

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rotaplast.org>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.asturiasacademy.org>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thespfl.com>.



*Demetrius (Owen) Marsh adds to the collection of bottles to be refunded. The proceeds will assist the Outreach program.*



## Prophet Elias Orthodox Church



*Bishop Demetrius and the congregation of Prophet Elias Orthodox Church on the parish feastday, July 20/August 2, 2008*

We began our adventure in the basement of the Alenov's house after the split with the Russian Church Abroad. We dedicated our humble chapel to Prophet Elias since the basement in many ways resembled a cave. We were truly confirmed in our choice after the first visit from Bishop Ephraim and Fr. Panteleimon. Somewhere between Fr. Panteleimon digging up dandelion roots for his monks in Brookline and Bishop Ephraim sitting humbly between the washer and dryer in the basement, we knew we had struck gold!

We always considered ourselves tied spiritually to Holy Enlighteners Church in S. Dakota due both to their close proximity and because of our many shared blessings in the form of many visiting priests. The arrival of our very dear Fr. Bohdan Borody ushered in more "regular" services. He is an exceptionally gentle priest with a rare ability to unify and strengthen the most feeble of souls.

When the Georgians landed, we thought, "We need these guys!" Of course, the Bishop informed us that there were sev-

eral parishes with the very same idea. But nobody can out whine a Midwesterner. Through God's providence, we were able to provide a temporary house for Fr. Andrew Boroda's family and an opportunity to move our basement chapel to a house next door. The Georgians became instant family and indeed made us all feel like one big family. It may be they just wanted to "huddle" because they were afraid of freezing to death during their first few Minnesota winters!

Just when we felt we could not possibly be more blessed having a permanent priest and family, the Waples made the scene, and for a few glorious years our tiny parish benefited from the double grace of Fr. Andrew and priest in the making, Fr. Michael. But alas, we were eventually forced to share.

We have managed to adapt to a variety of tastes and cultures, and do a combination of Slavonic and Byzantine with a sprinkling of Georgian for flavor. For more information, please contact Fr. Andrew Boroda at (612) 747-2081.



## James Burney Graves Jr., 1934–2009

Classicist, linguist, educator, historian, writer, and editor, James Graves fell asleep in the Lord on February 23, 2009. He leaves behind his wife, three sons and their wives, a daughter, ten grandchildren, seven great grandchildren, a sister and her family, and an extensive family of Orthodox friends and monastics.

James Burney Graves Jr. (affectionately nicknamed Deedan by his oldest grandson) was born on August 28, 1934, in Birmingham, Alabama. He grew up in the South in a God-believing Protestant family, often accompanying his preacher grandfather on his rounds of the rural countryside to visit and console parishioners. Thus young James was exposed to spiritually edifying conversations and gracious hospitality from which he learned that faith and selflessness were an integral part of a man's character and he grew up to be a serious man of real substance.

James graduated from Broughton High School in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1953 and from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1957. After receiving his Master's in the classics, he taught for a decade at the University of North Carolina and the University of Georgia. He was also headmaster at two private academies in South Carolina and later director of the Foundation for American Education. Subsequently, he was a writer/editor for three nationally

circulated magazines. He published some 300-odd articles, reviews, interviews, and columns, and was an accomplished poet. At the time of his death, he was writing a book on frontier heroes in America.

Disillusioned with the "religions" he had up to then

encountered and with only the seed of the early Church Fathers implanted from his classical education, James began the search that led him to Father Panteleimon and Holy Transfiguration Monastery. At the time of their meeting, both men were age 33. As James later related, he knew that when he left the monastery he had found the apostolic faith for which he had been yearning. In 1970, he was baptized at Holy Transfiguration Monastery, and in 1980 left his beloved South and moved to Ipswich, Massachusetts, where he could more fully participate in the faith. He considered it a great blessing to be able to attend services at Holy Transfiguration Monastery, and although he was flu-



ent in Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, it was reading the Church Fathers in Greek that became his favorite pastime.

As Father Panteleimon mentioned in the funeral eulogy, by steadfast example James led five generations of souls to the Orthodox faith. Well done, faithful servant. Eternal be his memory.

## SPFL Needs Your Help to Build a Church in the Bahamas

Father David Belden

Once again, my daughter Alexandra, her friend Leo Ahlin, and I arrived on Long Island, Bahamas the week before Holy Nativity. This is becoming an annual tradition! We were happy to find St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor (SPFL) in full swing, having arrived the week before. Fr. Peter Farnsworth had been chaplain the first week, and I now attempted to replace him for the second.

Twenty-two volunteers from the U.S. and Canada comprised the group. Our guest speaker was Maria Khoury of Israel, who spoke to us about the plight of the few remaining Christians in the Holy Land.

We enjoyed two weeks of work, prayer, religious discussion, and fellowship. The hard work and efforts of the volunteers resulted in the clearing of 1.25 acres of land for a church building, the pouring of a 20' x 30'

footer for the chapel, planting of eight coconut trees, and assistance to our hosts, the Maillis family, who are natives of the island. Liturgies were celebrated for five Sundays, as well as for Holy Nativity and Holy Theophany, the feasts of Sts. Nicholas and Spyridon, along with paraclesis services, vespers, and the blessing of the home site of Anthony Maillis and the newly baptized Mataniah Pinder, who plan to marry in the spring. They announced their engagement at Christmas dinner.

It is no coincidence that St. Spyridon was chosen as patron saint of the chapel to be erected. I have been able to be on the island for that feast for the past several years, ensuring a Liturgy on that day, and I hope to do so in the future.

SPFL—in league with many participants, their hosts, families, and friends—has initiated a fundraising campaign to raise \$26,000 towards building St. Spyri-

don's Chapel, Long Island, Bahamas. The donated work and labor of the participants significantly reduce the amount of money necessary to complete such a worthy project. Support has been provided thus far from a charitable foundation in Greece, the Leon and Aspasia Lemos Foundation, and also from private individuals in the amount of \$6,600. SPFL hopes to raise the additional \$19,400 by May, 2009, in order to return in the summer and complete the project in full. If you are able to contribute financially, please send a check payable to SPFL and earmarked "building fund" to:

SPFL  
8080 Quail Trail  
Huntingdon, PA 16652  
USA



*St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor will be erecting St. Spyridon's chapel on this site*

The hope of the SPFL is that St. Spyridon's will attract and serve as a religious retreat for Orthodox Christians and those seeking Holy Orthodoxy. The field is ripe to harvest here in the last Anglican Diocese in the world to ordain women priests. With the arrival of one on the island, few Anglicans here attend church anymore.

Many are looking toward Orthodoxy.

The proceeds of the sale of *The Bahamian Calendar* each year have funded my trip to serve the Maillis family for the past 13 years. Please continue to support the wonderful work of SPFL, and help in maintaining the Orthodox ministry on Long Island by the purchase of the calendar. This ministry is not just to one family, but also to the members of the SPFL as well as the Long Islanders themselves. Please visit [www.thespfl.org](http://www.thespfl.org) for more information, and tell your family and friends to do the same. Your support, prayers, and time are greatly appreciated.



## **Future Trips with St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor**

St. Spyridon's Chapel, Long Island, Bahamas: May 25–June 3

Convent of the Meeting of the Lord, Stanwood, WA: June 12–22

First Annual Holy Land Pilgrim's Reunion and Preview, Pillars of Orthodoxy Church, Carlisle, PA: July 9–12

Holy Theotokos Convent, Newmarket, ON: July 19–25

Holy Transfiguration Monastery and Holy Nativity Convent, Brookline, MA: August 9–16

St. Spyridon's Chapel, Long Island, Bahamas: December 17–31

St. Xenia Orthodox Mission, January 30–February 7, 2010

Contact St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor by calling (814) 386-5254 or by emailing [thespfl@gmail.com](mailto:thespfl@gmail.com).



To register for the event please visit [www.thespfl.com](http://www.thespfl.com) or call Demetri Patitsas at (814) 386-5254.

## A Modern Parable

Imagine, if you will, that one day during your lunch hour, as you were standing on a street corner minding your own business, a strangely dressed couple approached you and asked if they could speak to you for a moment.

The man was dressed with a powdered wig on his head, a silk shirt, a waistcoat, breeches that only reached to his knees, silk stockings and black shoes with a silver buckle on each shoe.

The woman had on a high powdered wig and a long flowing dress that reached almost to the ground. They looked like a couple that had just stepped out of a movie set for an American Revolutionary War film.

The couple began to explain to you that they were followers of a religion in which George Washington was a mighty prophet of Ba-al. Thus everything that George Washington taught, believed, said, and practiced must be accepted as the inspired word of Baal who is the one true God.

The speeches and letters which people think came from Washington are in the English language because that is the language of Heaven. Even though there are foreign language translations of some of these writings, they really cannot be understood unless they are read in the original English.

The speeches of Washington were actually written in Heaven on a tablet of stone. George Washington did not really write a single page of his works. They were given to him by the angel Gabriel out of Heaven. He merely recited them when Ba-al so ordered.

They went on to explain that, because he was a prophet of Ba-al, the true God, we must live as George Washington lived. For example, all men should dress in the manner which George Washington dressed. All women in particular should adopt a dress that Mrs. Washington wore.

We must even eat the food that the Washingtons ate. For example, George Washington did not like peas. Thus no one should be allowed to eat peas today.

Washington's political views must be viewed as the only valid form of government. And, since he owned slaves, slavery must be viewed as being a valid political structure of today.

At that moment, the alarm on the man's wrist-watch went off and he pulled a compass out of his coat pocket. After facing in a certain direction, the couple

got down on their hands and knees and bowed in prayer.

After they had finished their prayers, they got up. You could not help but ask them what they were doing.

They responded that they had to pray five times a day toward Washington, D.C., where the Washington Memorial was built.

As a matter of fact, all those who were followers of George Washington had to make a pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., at least once in their lifetime.

Once they got there, they had to run around the Washington Memorial seven times. Then they had to run down to the end of the mall and throw some stones at the devil.

The man and his wife also remarked that the Washington Memorial had actually been built by Adam. Although it had been subsequently destroyed at various periods, it had been rebuilt by Abraham and that all the biblical patriarchs actually lived at that exact spot. The Washington Memorial was a sacred site and it had always been part of the worship of God.

At this point, they asked for your opinion. You couldn't resist asking if this was Candid Camera, America's Funniest People, or some other show. They couldn't really be serious about this religion of Washingtonianism.

The idea of bowing in prayer toward the Washington Memorial was absurd. The memorial was not built by Adam or rebuilt by Abraham. The Patriarchs did not live in D.C. but in Israel. The whole thing was quite ridiculous.

They responded that they were in dead earnest and that they really believed that George Washington was a prophet of Ba-al and that his writings were the Word of God.

You responded by saying, "It seems to me that you have made a religion out of 18th century American colonial culture.

Do you really expect people in the 21st century, to live, dress and eat in accordance with the habits and tastes of people living in the 1700s in the United States?

What if the Russians were to invent a religion in which we were told that we had to pray toward Moscow five times a day? Why can't the Japanese invent a religion in which everyone had to pray toward Tokyo? Why can't the Mexicans say that you must take



a pilgrimage to Mexico City once in your lifetime or you will not be saved?

This whole religion seems to be silly at the least and racist at the worst. Why would you expect every culture and every race of people to live the way that people lived in 18th century colonial America? It simply doesn't make sense!"

At this point, the man opened his coat and revealed that he was wearing a shoulder harness with a gun in it. He said that his religion did not allow anyone to ridicule or blaspheme their holy faith.

At that moment, your wristwatch alarm went off, indicating that your lunch hour was over.

With a sigh of relief, you explained that you had to get back to work. But if they would like to talk with you further, they could meet you on this street corner

sometime. With that said, you beat a hasty retreat without waiting for any response from them.

### Conclusion

You had just encountered a religion which was actually the deification of 18th century colonial American culture.

It was actually more cultural than religious in essence. It was also a subtle form of racism in that it demanded that all men and women everywhere in the world should bow in prayer to the capital of the United States.

*Editor's Note: As you might have guessed, this parable is really about "the religion of peace."*

(Edited from *Islam Unveiled*, by Dr. Robert A. Morey, The Scholars Press, Shermans Dale, PA., 1991.)

## A Scriptural Clarification

Priestmonk Haralampus

For the Orthodox Church, the official text of the Old Testament is the Septuagint, translated from the Hebrew into Greek by seventy-two learned rabbis about 290 years before Christ. The Septuagint contained many passages and prophecies prefiguring and foretelling the advent of our Saviour. Later Jewish scholars compiled the Masoretic text, removing or changing these passages and interpolating others. They also deleted some books. This new text was completed about 1500 years after Christ.

The Protestants, reacting violently against Roman Catholicism which held to the Vulgate—a Latin translation of the Septuagint edited by Jerome—determined that the Jewish Masoretic text was the only authentic one. The books that had been deleted were called apocryphal, i.e., hidden, unauthentic, spurious: books which Christians as well as Jews had revered for centuries. At best, some referred to these books as being "deuterocanonical," i.e., of an inferior or doubtful canonicity.

The Church, however, has always held those books and other passages deleted by the Jews as being valid and canonical Scripture, part of the collection of sacred books known as the Old Testament. The following books of the Septuagint are accepted as canonical by the Church but rejected by the post-Christian Jews: Tobit, Esdras, Judith, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Sirach, the Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, the Epistle of

Jeremias, Song of the Three Children, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, I-IV Maccabees, Prayer of Manasseh. We will not list the various distortions in the text introduced by the Jews. Protestants did not consider the above to be Scripture and called them apocryphal books. Nevertheless, the King James translation associated them with the other Scriptures by printing them in an appendix titled *The Apocrypha*.

The article "The Apocrypha," published in Issue 32 of *The Faithful Steward*, does not refer to the above named works which we consider canonical Scripture. Rather, it refers to those works that pretend to a canonical authority by citing as author an Apostle or Saint of antiquity. These are spurious works which often disseminate heresies or gnostic ideas, forging a specious authenticity in order to advocate their own beliefs, or even simply to entertain. Such are the *Gospel According to Thomas*, the Apocalypses of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and of the Theotokos, the apocryphal books of Elias, Jeremiah and Enoch, the *Ascension of Esaias*, etc. Others, like *The Epistle of Barnabas*, may be doctrinally sound and even edifying, yet the Church has rejected them as not being genuine works of the attributed author. If a false claim is made and a work is a forgery, a lie can have no part in the truth, and therefore is not canonical Scripture. Only such spurious works are labeled by the Church as apocryphal.

## a canticle

In Honour of the Transfiguration of Our Lord and God  
and Saviour, Jesus Christ

*F* Come, with pure hearts, *C* O Chris - tian men, *F* let us

*D* *Un.* *F* *C* purge our minds of care, that with faith we may

*F* *D* *Un.* as - cend Ta - bor's slopes with souls a - ware.

- 2) For the God and Sovereign Lord  
Of the Heavens and the earth,  
Whom all angel-kind adored,  
Willed to grant mortals rebirth.
- 3) Hence, to show His might and grace  
And the power given Him  
To undo Adam's disgrace,  
Came He to this mountain's rim.
- 4) Then He chose three men anon,  
Whom the Trinity foreknew;  
These were Peter, James, and John,  
Taken from His hallowed few.
- 5) On Mount Tabor's awesome slopes,  
Christ ascended with His three;  
Then, fulfilling mankind's hopes,  
He revealed His majesty.
- 6) O, the splendour of that Light!  
O, the glory of His face!  
And His raiment grew so white,  
Lo, the sun's beams were effaced!
- 7) And, behold, there stood two men,  
All encompassed in His grace;  
And to Him Whom none transcend  
Spake these prophets from His race.

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- 8) These were Moses the most meek,  
And Elias, fierce with zeal;  
On Mount Sinai's lofty peak,  
And Mount Carmel were they sealed.
- 9) Now they spake to Him anew  
To bear witness with the three,  
Whom His fiery grace bedewed,  
Springing from eternity.
- 10) This is My beloved Son!  
Came the Voice from Heaven's height.  
He hath pleased Me ere the sun  
Shone upon that primal night.
- 11) Then the radiant Cloud appeared,  
Overshadowing the Mount.  
O, how awesome was their fear!  
These things no tongue can recount!
- 12) Yet, now pierced with love Divine,  
Smitten in their hearts, they cried:  
It is good, O Most Sublime,  
To abide here at Thy side.
- 13) Though a fisherman by trade,  
Peter sought to emulate  
Paul, the tent-maker, and bade  
Thee this favour to vouchsafe.
- 14) Many years passed, yet that Light  
Faded not in Peter's breast;  
For his eyes, though dimmed in might,  
Yearned in Christ to find their rest.
- 15) As disciples of these men,  
Let us take heed of their words,  
Hearkening to them again,  
Till our fervent prayer be heard.
- 16) For they shine like lights unguised  
In the darkness of this vale,  
Till the Day-Star, Christ, arise  
In our hearts, and grace prevail.
- 17) By the Virgin's prayers, O Lord,  
On our souls bestow Thy light,  
That with faith forevermore  
We may bless Thee, O Most High.

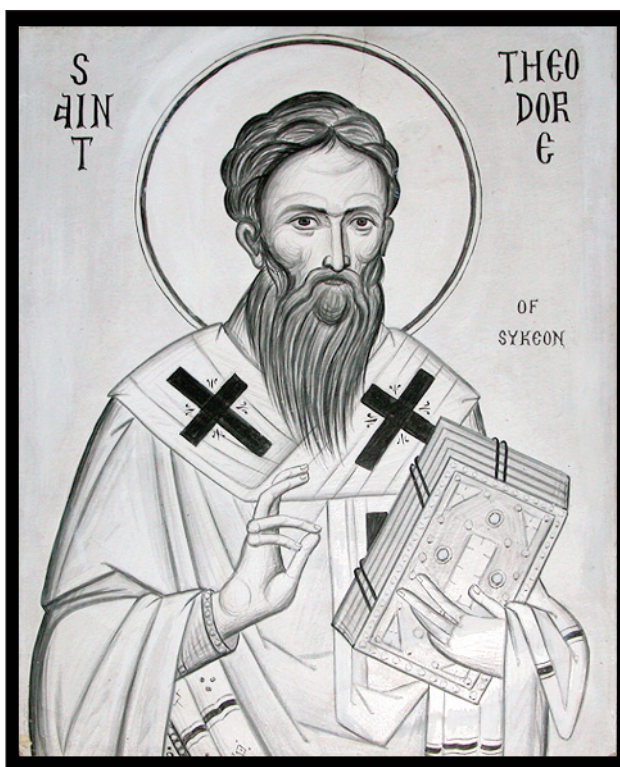
Note: The music and ison for this hymn were transcribed from a tape recording (c. 1960) of an unknown choir in Thessalonica, Greece.

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## An Incident from the Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon

From *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*, trans. Elizabeth Dawes, (London: 1948)

A man called George, a Cappadocian, was passing along the public road, bound with chains about his neck, hands and feet, and in the custody of a strong contingent of the imperial guard and soldiers. He was charged, they said, with making insurrection against the Emperor Phocas. This man eagerly desired to go up to the Saint and be deemed worthy of his prayers, and as his guard had the same wish, they ascended to the monastery with him, and after praying in the oratories of the saints, they also went to the cell in which the Saint was. After doing reverence to him they received his blessing. The guards besought him to advise the captive to behave himself reasonably on the journey and not to harbour any evil designs against himself or against one of them, so that they themselves might not run the risk of punishment at the Emperor's hands. And this the Saint did, admonishing the prisoner from the Holy Scriptures, saying, 'Things here are temporal, son, but things there are eternal; and it is good that one who has suffered violence from another should die like just Abel, and God's blameless priest, Zacharias, and the holy John the Baptist, and Christ's holy apostles and martyrs, rather than meditate injury to himself and become subject to eternal condemnation. For think of this, son; if you undergo death either for the crime of which you are now accused or for any other reason, accept it willingly as thereby taking your punishment in this world and going away guiltless to the next life. But if you are innocent of any crime and are to suffer death unjustly here, you will receive a crown from God like His saints who were violently put to death.' With these and many other words from the sacred



Scriptures the man's despair was cured and he then asked to be allowed to partake of the Holy Mysteries. The Saint said to the soldiers who held him, 'Show honour, my sons, to our Master's Holy Mystery, and loose this man from his chains until he has partaken; for it is not right that a faithful man should be in bonds to receive the Christ Who suffered for us and loosed us from the bonds of Hades.' But they said he must excuse them, as they did not dare to do it

because the man was brave, and if perchance he were to commit any folly, they would no longer be able to restrain him. The inspired man then took the holy cup of the Communion to give to him and looking up to Heaven groaned, whereupon the captive's fetters were immediately loosened and the chains which bound him fell to the ground with a clatter. The guards were alarmed and ran to the doors and bolted them to prevent his running out and escaping from them, but the Saint said to them, 'Do not be afraid of him at all, for I know the man's mind and he will not commit any folly.' After administering the Holy Mysteries to him he arranged for him to have a

meal together with his guards; after that his chains were put on again and they went their way.

*Dismissal Hymn. Fourth Tone*

Since thou hadst been known from thy swaddling bands to be sanctified, and hadst been shown to be filled with graces, thou didst illuminate the world with miracles, and didst drive off the swarms of demons, O sacred minister Theodore; wherefore do thou beseech the Lord in our behalf.

Icon and Dismissal Hymn credits:  
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## Jacob and the Son of God

From *St. Irenaios' the Preaching of the Apostles*,  
Jack N. Sparks, Holy Cross Press, Brookline, MA, 1987.

When Jacob was traveling in Mesopotamia, he saw the Lord in a dream, “standing upon the ladder,” (Genesis 28:23 f.), that is, the tree set up from earth to Heaven (cf. Genesis 28:12-15). By that tree, those who believe in Him go up to Heaven, for by His sufferings we are raised on high. All visions of this kind refer to the Son of God, in His being with people and speaking to them. Certainly it is not the Father of all, the Creator, Who is never seen by the world, Who said, “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will you build Me, or what is the place of My rest?” (Isaiah 66:1f; Acts 7:49). Nor is it He Who “holds the earth with His hand and with His span the heavens” (Isaiah 40:12). It was not the Father Who stood in a specific place and spoke with Abraham. That was the Word of God, Who was always with mankind, foretelling what was to come and acquainting man with God.

## St. Xenia Camp 2009 August 16-22 (n.s.)

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About Our Logo  
*A Divine Confirmation*

*The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.*

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Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston  
1476 Centre St  
Roslindale, MA 02131-1417  
Tel: (617) 323-6379; Fax: (617) 323-3861  
Web site: [www.homb.org](http://www.homb.org)

## THE DIOCESE NEEDS SUPPORT

“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward* is in need of your support.



# The Faithful Steward

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